

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ENRG, EG, US, IS, XE, PFOR
SUBJ: GULF OF SUEZ: MARINER INCIDENT

REF: (A) CAIRO 11704, (B) CAIRO 11703, (C) CAIRO 11702

1. FURTHER DETAILS AND CLARIFICATION ON MARINER INCIDENT AS
RELAYED BY AMOCO MANAGER ROSS CRAIG SEPT 1 ARE AS FOLLOWS:

(A) AMOCO HAD CLOSELY COORDINATED CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR
MARINER ACTIVITIES WITH GUPCO AND EGPC. CRAIG HAD EARLIER
INFORMED EGPC DEPUTY CHAIRMAN AYUTI OF HIS APPROACH TO
EMBASSY REGARDING NOTIFICATION OF GOI RE MARINER ACTIVITIES.
AS RESULT ALL CONCERNED EXPECTED MARINER TO BE INTERCEPTED.
MARINER FOREMAN WAS INSTRUCTED TO LEAVE AREA HAVING ONCE
BEEN ADVISED BY ISRAELIS TO DO SO, AND AFTER STATING THAT
MARINER'S ACTIVITIES WERE FULLY WITHIN AMOCO'S LEGAL RIGHTS.
EGYPTIANS CONCERNED THEREFORE THOUGHT THEY KNEW WHAT MARINER'S
REACTION WOULD BE. THEY DID NOT HOWEVER EXPECT HILAL'
ORDER TO STAND FAST.

(B) AS A RESULT OF PREARRANGED PLANS, MARINER BEGAN
HAULING IN ITS ANCHORS IMMEDIATELY AFTER RECEIVING FIRST
ISRAELI WARNING AT 1700. (CRAIG MAINTAINS THAT
AMERICANS ABOARD MARINER WILL TESTIFY TO THAT FACT THAT
ISRAELIS GAVE THEM ULTIMATUM LEAVE WITHIN EIGHT HOURS. FULL DE-
BRIEFING OF MARINER CREW WILL TAKE PLACE AT RAS SHUKAIR

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WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS.) SHIP THEREFORE HAD RAISED AT

LEAST 3 OF ITS ANCHORS BEFORE IT RECEIVED COUNTER ORDER TO HOLD ITS POSITION. ACCORDING TO CRAIG, EGYPTIAN RADIO OPERATOR AT RAS SHUKAIR RECEIVED HIS (CRAIG'S) ORDER AT 1915 HOURS AND DECIDED ON HIS OWN THAT, BECAUSE SECURITY FORCES HAD RESTRICTED CONTACT WITH MARINER, HE WOULD SEND BOAT TO MARINER WITH COUNTERMANDING ORDER TO HOLD POSITION. AS YET NO ONE KNOWS WHAT TIME ORDER ACTUALLY REACHED MARINER, BUT THAT IT DID SO SEEMS TO BE REFLECTED BY FACT THAT MARINER HELD POSITION UNTIL SECOND CONTACT WITH ISRAELI GUN BOAT AT ABOUT MIDNIGHT. IN ADDITION CRAIG HAS INFORMATION THIS MORNING THAT WORK BOAT ALSO RECEIVED ORDER TO STAND FIRM AND ATTEMPTED TO APPROACH MARINER TO RESET ANCHORS. ISRAELI PATROL BOAT INTERCEPTED WORK BOAT, WARNING HIM AWAY WITH UNSPECIFIED THREAT. WORK BOAT REQUESTED FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS FROM RAS SHUKAIR. RAS SHUKAIR EGYPTIAN RADIO OPERATOR TOLD HIM TO CONTINUE TO REPLACE ANCHORS. ISRAELI PATROL BOAT AGAIN WARNED HIM AWAY AND CAPTAIN OF WORK BOAT REFUSED TO CARRY OUT RAS SHUKAIR'S ORDER AND RETURNED TO PORT. DECISION TO FINALLY MOVE MARINER TAKEN BY DRILLING FOREMAN ON BASIS (A) SECOND CONTACT WITH GUN BOAT AT MIDNIGHT WARNING HIM THAT THERE ONLY ONE HOUR REMAINING UNTIL DEADLINE AND (B) FACT THAT ISRAELI HELICOPTER GUN SHIP HOVERED WITHIN FEW FEET OF MARINER'S LANDING PAD, CLEARLY INDICATING ACCORDING TO CRAIG, THAT ISRAELIS INTENDED TO SEIZE VESSEL.

2. CRAIG MET DR. AYUTI, DEPUTY CHAIRMAN EGPC MORNING SEPTEMBER 1. AYUTI ADVISED HIM THAT EGPC DOES NOT WANT AMOCO TO TRY TO REPLACE MARINER RIG AT SITE 304-1. RIG HAS BEEN ORDERED TO DRILL ALTERNATE SITE IN JULY FIELD. AYUTI ALSO TOLD CRAIG THAT REASON EGYPTIAN GUN BOATS WERE NOT PRESENT IN TIME TO BACK UP MARINER'S STAND FIRM ORDERS WAS THAT AMERICAN AMBASSADOR AND AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AT "HIGH LEVELS" HAD PRESURED EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT NOT TO SEND GUN BOATS INTO AREA. (SOURCE IS REPORTEDLY MINPET HILAL). IMPLICATION ACCORDING TO CRAIG, CLEARLY WAS THAT USG BEARS RESPONSIBILITY FOR MARINER'S REMOVAL. EMBOFF NOTED TO CRAIG THAT AS FAR AS HE KNEW NO SUCH INTERVENTION HAD BEEN MADE. ACCORDING TO REPORTS FROM RAS SHUKAIR

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TWO EGYPTIAN WARSHIPS ARRIVED AT ABOUT 2345 AUGUST 31 AND ARE NOW ANCHORED JUST OFF RAS SHUKAIR.

3. AYUTI ALSO TOLD CRAIG THAT DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN TO "NEGOTIATE DEVELOPMENT OF RAMADAN FIELD IN POLITICAL SPHERE" AND SO NO FURTHER ATTEMPTS TO PLACE RIG IN THE SAME AREA WOULD BE TRIED AT THIS TIME.

4. COMMENT: DESPITE AYUBI'S
STATEMENT ABOUT NO PRESENT PLANS TO RESUME DRILLING,
WE CAN BE SURE THAT GOE EXPECTS THAT WE WILL TAKE FURTHER
ACTION WITH ISRAELIS TO RESOLVE THIS MATTER,
ESPECIALLY SINCE EGYPTIANS APPARENTLY CONSIDER USG
RESPONSIBLE FOR MARINER'S HAVING GIVEN IN TO
ISRAELI DEMANDS. THIS PROBLEM HAS NOT GONE AWAY AND
WILL NOT DO SO UNTIL WE DECIDE ON A FIRM COURSE OF
ACTION TO MAKE CLEAR TO ISRAEL THAT WE WILL NOT TOLERATE
FURTHER INTERFERENCE WITH LEGITIMATE ACTIVITIES BY
AMERICAN FIRMS IN CONCESSION GRANTED TO AMERICAN COMPANIES.
REQUEST DEPT'S RESPONSE ON WHAT WE MAY NOW TELL GOE
AND AMOCO.
EILTS

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